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West Coast Main Line Draft RUS

Response from Railfuture

Introduction

Railfuture has been invited to respond to the draft West Coast main Line RUS, this document is our response. Railfuture is a national voluntary group organised in England as twelve regional branches plus two national branches in Scotland and Wales. This response has been compiled by members of the North West branch with contributions from the London and South East, Scotland, Thames Valley and West Midlands branches

Our response has divided into three parts, section 1 looks at the Gaps and options in chapter 5 and commented as we feel appropriate there; section 2 looks at areas we think the West Coast RUS does not address. These first two sections largely relate to the West Coast Main Line in England as far as Carlisle; section 3 has the response from our colleagues in Railfuture Scotland and mostly relates to the line from north of Carlisle.

Section 1: Gaps and options in chapter 5

Southern WCML including London Suburban services

The East-West Rail consortium proposal to reintroduce passenger services from Oxford and Aylesbury to Bletchley and Milton Keynes is referred to in Section 4.3 *Uncommitted Schemes* on page 65 but is not subsequently mentioned again in Section 6 *Emerging Strategy* which is an omission we feel should be rectified. In particular, the reference in 4.3 should also specifically include the following:-

- use as a freight route for access to/from Daventry and the south coast
- use as a diversionary route during engineering or other blockades between Oxford & Coventry/Nuneaton.

OC 1.1 – 12 car trains on outer suburban Euston trains

Recognition of the requirement for 12 car trains in the peaks is welcomed; it is likely that during the period of review this will no doubt extend to across the day as well. Furthermore, if East West Rail becomes operational there will be additional demand for these services by passengers changing from/to them at Bletchley or Milton Keynes.

However we suggest that there would be both cost savings and operational benefits if this done by lengthening the existing Class 350 trains to 6 car units. In which context we note that the West Coast RUS has reported crowding on some Coventry Line services, currently worked by 4-car units, where the business case cannot support lengthening to an 8-car set.

OC-2: West London Line services. We support the recommendation in the South East RUS that the Milton Keynes - East Croydon service should be lengthened to 8-cars as soon as rolling stock becomes available, but we do note that there may be issues of signalling immunisation at the point where the line crosses London Underground lines that may not be easy to resolve. It should be noted that this service also provides a useful connection between the Midlands and South-East for passengers who wish to avoid crossing between the London terminals. We therefore suggest that consideration should be given to extending this service to Gatwick Airport. Since the removal of the direct Cross Country service in 2008, many stations on the West Coast Main Line lost their direct services to Britain's second Airport, so with direct services or one change, this idea would restore that. We further suggest that consideration

should be given to relocating the electrical supply changeover point (at North Pole Jn.) to coincide with a station - such as Shepherds Bush - to speed up this service.

JT 1.1 – an additional hourly train between London/North West calling at Milton Keynes

Any additional through service between Milton Keynes and north west England is to be welcomed as it will provide more journey opportunities without the need to change. Likewise, with East West Rail operational many passengers travelling from/to the Thames Valley area/Bucks to the north will find that changing at Milton Keynes is a more attractive proposition than changing at Birmingham or elsewhere in the West Midlands.

RL14 – improved Milton Keynes - Birmingham fast morning peak services

The slight time penalty for London passengers might be unavoidable if an additional stop is required to cope with volumes on this flow.

Bletchley platform lengthening & freight loop

Again these proposals are welcome and necessary in the light of OC 1.1. However it should be stressed in the RUS that any works at Bletchley do not conflict with the possible introduction of East West Rail; in other words that the latter is "future proofed".

West Midlands area.

OC-4: Rugby - Crewe. We note that the discussion in the RUS on additional Sunday services along the Trent Valley has been overtaken by London Midland's recent s22a application to double the service which we obviously support. This service provides a vital link between the Trent Valley towns, the North-West and London. There has been strong growth since the service was introduced and current loadings far exceed expectations.

OC-5: Birmingham - Scotland. Railfuture welcomes the proposal to provide for additional vehicles on this busy service; particularly if this involves creating "Electric Bi-mode Voyagers" or using a Pendolino on the busiest services. We suggest that this service should be extended to terminate at Birmingham International where it would provide enhanced connectivity between the North West and Birmingham Airport and the NEC as well as releasing capacity at New Street station.

FC-1: Freight capacity. The RUS should note the proposed new Intermodal Freight Terminal at Stretton (near Four Ashes). The development of this 200 acre site is discussed on p 68 of the West Midlands RUS and it seems likely that this will result in a significant flow from London via Rugby, Coventry and Bescot in addition to those predicted.

FC-4: Routing northbound freight via Coventry and Nuneaton. Railfuture agrees with the RUS that this is not generally a good idea in view of the conflict with proposals for an enhanced Coventry - Nuneaton passenger service (which is a Regional Funding priority).

We also welcome the tabulation of regulation loops, in the RUS [Table 3.2, p 28] as this clearly illustrates the amount of work which is still to be done before longer (640m or 750m) freight trains can run on a regular basis.

JT-1.2: Improved journey time between Euston and Glasgow.

We support the overall concept of speeding up the main London - Glasgow service and providing an additional hourly service calling at Milton Keynes, Nuneaton, Crewe, Warrington, Wigan and Preston. The potential extension of this service to Blackpool North or other North-West destinations would be a valuable bonus. However to retain connectivity for passengers from Leicester, Shrewsbury and Stoke-on-Trent it is vital that this new service should always call at both Nuneaton and Crewe not, as suggested in the RUS, alternate between these stations.

JT-3.1: Changes to Trent Valley service.
JT-4.1: Reroute one Cross Country service via Crewe.
JT-4.2: Extend Manchester - Stoke local service to Birmingham.

We support these changes as the combined options offer the following benefits;

[JT4.1] A faster XC service between Birmingham and Manchester, though we do feel that as there are currently sufficient trains between Birmingham, Wolverhampton and Crewe then the second Cross Country could run direct to Wilmslow without stopping at Crewe – (it could use the avoiding lines if these were upgraded);

[JT3.1] A faster service between the Trent Valley and Crewe

[JT4.2] A direct service between Birmingham and Stone and Congelton

There is also a linkage to proposals which Chris Dale of ECLRUG is suggesting for the Manchester - Stoke service group and we understand that the proposed new semi-fast service between Birmingham and Manchester via Stoke has already been pathed by London Midland as far as Stockport (assuming a Class 350 Desiro). Note however that in our alternative proposal for connecting the Potteries to Manchester Airport below (RL-3.1) we would suggest the use of the bay platform at Stoke for a Manchester Airport-Stoke via Crewe service, but we understand however that this might mean the Manchester – Stoke via Stockport local service (run by Northern) terminates at Macclesfield; if that was the case, local passengers currently making connections at Stoke for both Euston and XC services would need to be provided for, either by more Euston/XC trains stops at Macclesfield or that London Midland semi-fast stopped at Macclesfield, though a “double change” from local to semi-fast at Macclesfield, then to a fast service at Stoke needs to be avoided.

The proposed extension of London - Crewe services to Liverpool certainly does no harm and extending one of the Birmingham services to Wigan, Warrington and Preston will give much better connections from Stafford to the North - particularly as half of the Scottish services do not stop at Crewe and the Voyagers from Birmingham are always crowded

RL-2.1: Divert alternate Birmingham - Liverpool services to Preston.

This option provides a direct service from Winsford and Hartford to Warrington and should be supported. We note that the idea has been anticipated by London Midland's recent s22a application to the Rail regulator.

RL-3.1: Extend Derby-Crewe service to Manchester Airport.

We would ask the RUS team to re-examine this suggestion as extending the existing Manchester Airport - Crewe service to Stoke-on-Trent seems a far better option for the following four reasons:

- a. Airport services ideally need to start early in the morning and finish later at night; but the Derby-Crewe line is shut between 10pm and 6 am as the 6 manual boxes there are only staffed for two shifts.
- b. The changes proposed in JT-3.1 and JT-4.2 will result in a reduction of service between Kidsgrove, Alsager and Crewe which would be replaced by extending the existing Class 323 service from Crewe to Stoke.
- c. There are already 2 tph between Wilmslow, Sandbach and Crewe and currently appears to be no requirement for additional capacity.
- d. Travel time between Crewe and Man Airport is over 30 minutes for a 75 mph Class 153 unit which would be running 'under the wires' all the way and also introduce a speed differential with other services using this busy route. Central Trains previously ran trains through to Manchester Airport and there were often delays at this end of the route whereas the current, simple, Crewe-Derby diagram is very reliable.

It also seems likely that with a layover at Stoke-on-Trent (where the Bay Platform will be available) a better combined diagram for the Manchester - Crewe/Stoke local service group might be available. Fewer trains will be reversing in Platform 1 at Crewe.

Section 2; Issues not discussed in the RUS:

Southern WCML

a. We are concerned with the loss of long distance services from Watford which have been largely lost since the introduction of the Virgin VHF timetable. The problem is that none of the LM services that do stop there make connections into Virgin Train services further north and the only other possibility has been going back into Euston and out again. Bearing in mind that with its proximity to the M25, Watford has a huge catchment area, bigger than most other stations en route, observations by our members have always indicated that most Virgin Trains which previously stopped there all did very good business. It is also the best way currently to access Heathrow with regular Coach services there and before Virgin abandoned the place there was also a dedicated rail air service.

Midlands area

b. Since the draft RUS was published a new Gap has unexpectedly arisen with the closure of Wrexham, Shropshire and Marylebone services to London. Shrewsbury first lost its direct service to London in 1995 and the WSMR service was welcomed by many Shropshire, Telford and Walsall residents.

We suggest that provision should be made in the West Coast timetable for through services from London to Shrewsbury to be introduced as soon as suitable rolling stock becomes available. The West Midlands and Chilterns RUS predicts strong passenger growth on this route and, in addition to the enhanced connectivity provided at Telford and Shrewsbury, extending the existing hourly Euston - Wolverhampton service to Shrewsbury would release capacity at the latter, operationally congested, station.

c. In discussing Airport Services the RUS has not commented on the lack of any direct services from Shropshire and Mid-Wales to Manchester Airport. We had hoped that the construction of a third platform at the Airport station would have enabled the provision of a through service from the Welsh Borders.

d. Now that planning for a flyover at Norton Bridge is underway it is surprising that the RUS does not evaluate the possibility of a faster layout at Stone junction. [page 19 & Fig 3.2] We think that a layout similar to the 3 track layout at Cheadle Hume could be created - although this would require the Down platform at Stone to be relocated a few yards south of its present position.

North West area

e. We think we might challenge lack of in depth intervention in the RUS for Manchester - Scotland services. The Manchester - Scotland service is already at 80% capacity on departure from Manchester Piccadilly and 100% on departure from Preston (table 3.14), so taking an average of the lowest and highest forecast growth figures, this gives 56% growth to 2024, whereas the expected provision of class 350 stock with seating laid out in a similar way to the class 185's, would give approximately 33% increase in capacity, so this does not address the capacity and neither does it anticipate the "sparks" effect of electrification. There is also an issue of the track capacity limitations caused by the 100 mph non-tilt stock, so we feel that there might be a good case to use say class 221 stock released from electrifying the Crewe - Chester line (referred to elsewhere) on tilt services from Manchester - Scotland, especially if these were "bi-mode" enabled stock.

f. There is a reference in the RUS to the limitations in the layout at Lancaster station, but no particular solutions offered, we feel the following would address that.

Delays North of Lancaster Station - The two track West Coast main line between Lancaster station and Carnforth is heavily utilised due to its being shared by local traffic to Morecambe, Barrow, and Leeds. Currently DMU's from these locations terminating at Lancaster station largely use bays 1 and 2. To access these platforms the trains have frequently to stop on the main line north of Carlisle bridge whilst waiting to cross the northbound main line - often for several minutes. During this manoeuvre the main line is blocked in both directions. This could be solved by greater use of platform 5. It is true that the trains would have to cross the main

line to head north again when they leave but by waiting in the station they would not block the line whilst waiting for a path. Platform 5 is a long platform and could easily be divided into 5a and 5b sections each able to take a 2/3 car DMU. In addition, if necessary, platform 6, which is still in place and accessible but without a track, could be pressed into use at the cost of some investment.

Delays South of Lancaster Station – Some Virgin trains from London terminate at Lancaster. These trains are scheduled to empty of passengers at Lancaster and then proceed north to Carnforth where they are cleaned and reset in the sidings, following which they return to Lancaster to pick up southbound passengers. When these trains are delayed it is currently the practice to turn them round at Lancaster. In this case they terminate in platform 3 – the only platform accessible to main line trains approaching from the south. The trains are then emptied, swept and reset, and passengers waiting for the southbound journey are prodded over the bridge from platform 4 to platform three – the total process often taking 15 minutes or so. During this process following passenger trains scheduled to stop at Lancaster are ponded back on the northbound main line as there is currently no crossover south of Lancaster station. This leads to delays of the following trains and, in at least one case, cancellation – the Windermere service having to be terminated at Oxenholme as it had no time to run to Windermere and back for its next scheduled journey. Both platforms 4 and 5 can handle trains heading north or south and are long enough for the London service. If a crossover can be provided south of the station, the delayed service from the south could be diverted into one of these platforms avoiding delays to following services and passenger movement would be avoided as 4 & 5 form a single island platform.

g. Platform Height – Reports are circulating that 158 Units and others with outward opening doors are currently unable to use bays 1 and 2 at Lancaster as the doors catch the top of the platform surface. Network Rail should arrange for tests to check if this information is factual and if so look into the possibility of either adjusting the track level slightly or lowering the platform heights to overcome this problem as this restricts operational flexibility.

h. Timetabling – Intercity and Trans-Pennine mainline services have now been adjusted to operate a regular clock face timetable on the West Coast Main Line in the north west. Northern local services to Morecambe, Leeds, Barrow and the Cumbrian Coast remain all over the place. Could an hourly time slot be allocated to each service – with two slots at peak times where necessary – thus simplifying West Coast operations and making times more recognisable to passengers which in turn is likely to encourage usage.

j. Passing Loops – The stretch of mainline between Lancaster and Carnforth is heavily utilised. South of Hest Bank the north branch line from Morecambe runs alongside and level with the main line for some distance (14 electric pole lengths) before joining the main line. If a link was made at the Southern end of this stretch this would form a passing loop capable of handling all passenger trains and some freight trains and may ease pressure on this stretch.

k. Electrification – looking further ahead the impact of the Manchester – Blackpool electrification needs to be looked at as far as it affects services on the heavily oversubscribed Lancaster - Carnforth two track section of the line. It would seem pointless to continue to run diesel units from Manchester to Barrow and Windermere after this improvement. We think that at least the branch line to Windermere should also be considered for electrification, particularly as we understand that it would not need additional power supplies for the short section of single track.

We also think may make sense therefore to look at the electrification of the short stretch of track between Hest Bank South junction and Morecambe. This would allow an electric service from Manchester terminating in Morecambe clear of the main line to replace these current diesel services. The current London trains which terminate at Lancaster could also run on to a Morecambe terminus instead of using the main line to Carnforth. A local Windermere to Oxenholme service would serve for this branch. This would leave only the Barrow and Leeds diesels using the main line from Carnforth to Lancaster. It may make sense therefore to relook at Carnforth. Restoring the main line platforms would cause blockage but by using platforms 1 and 2 (already wired) and restoring the old link back to the main line north of Carnforth would enable a number of main line trains to stop at Carnforth. This in turn would allow the diesel

Barrow trains to terminate making connections South and North here rather than run on to Lancaster on the main line, and filter across it to their local platforms. This option was looked at and considered too expensive to provide a stop for the current Windermere trains but as a junction for Barrow the case is more likely to stand up. In addition with the onset of HS2 it is likely high speed trains using the HS2 line for the first 100 miles from London will continue their journeys at maximum conventional speed to provide faster links to Glasgow/Edinburgh putting further pressure on the need to remove slow local traffic from this stretch of line. We think that Crewe – Chester should be looked at for electrification too; with the arrival of additional new and lengthened existing Pendolinos due in 2012, we feel that there will be sufficient electric stock capacity to accommodate this.

l. We are concerned that Warrington Bank Quay and Wigan North Western stations will have fewer journey opportunities in all these proposals, in particular northbound from Warrington, though we welcome the proposed electric Liverpool – Scotland services and we suggest these should stop at Wigan.

m. One area that's not addressed with the RUS post electrification is the possibility of extending one of the proposed 4 tph Euston-Manchester services on to Liverpool via the newly electrified Chat Moss line; this would give Liverpool 2 tph to Euston and possibly be a quicker service than the proposed London Midland service, and might address the issue of platform capacity at Manchester on an enhanced service.

Section 3: RAILFUTURE SCOTLAND RESPONSE TO WCML RUS (2010/2011)

Introduction

Scotland and Scottish services constitute a relatively small part of the WCML RUS. Carstairs Junctions and lines north are excluded, their having been considered in the Scotland RUS. Railfuture Scotland is principally concerned with the section from Carlisle up to Carstairs Junction but the consequent effects from other Scottish centres, including Glasgow, are the priority.

The WCML for Scotland is a mixed traffic railway and must remain so. No operating sector has a priority to exclude others. In fact, for Scotland, the railfreight sector could be considered the most important with the only alternative being the M6/M74 Motorways.

A priority for the RUS consultation document further south appears to be challenges for the WCML Franchise. Information in the RUS indicates low passenger patronage on the Scottish section and this is confirmed by observed low usage as potential passengers have voted with their airline tickets, City-link tickets, East Coast tickets and Caledonian sleeper tickets. Is cutting journey times by a few minutes through fewer stops the issue, or are there other service quality issues?

As previously, the RUS document provides a wealth of information which would not have been made available to rail user representatives in former times. Railfuture Scotland is most grateful for this information.

There is a slight contradiction, in that the RUS Document appears to consider that there are no effective capacity issues between Carlisle and Carstairs except for the lack of overtaking loops long enough to accommodate the longest freight trains. This is confirmed by a lack of proposed interventions. However, in detailed parts of the RUS some minor "constraints" are mentioned. Railfuture Scotland concurs with this overall conclusion.

Demand Forecasts

It appears accepted that the many demand prediction models, especially for new services, have been largely discredited and that actual passenger and freight growth is much higher than forecast, although it will not necessarily continue in this way across all sectors. Therefore Network Rail's positive attitude to growth is welcomed. From a Scottish aspect, the point would be made that shorter distance passenger travel, often dismissed by the authorities, may well be a growth leader in future as demonstrated by the Northern Franchise results. Also that

railfreight growth is almost totally dependent on how much the Government wishes to subsidise the road haulage industry and there are suggestions that the Government wishes to introduce methods whereby road haulage pays more of its full business and environmental costs.

The other "Growth" issue which cannot be Network Rail's financial responsibility but which should be both considered in infrastructure planning and "sold" to Government is the capability to react, on the nation's behalf, to major events which may be more frequent in the future, including events such as oil blockades, airport lockdowns and major evacuations.

Gaps

Lockerbie (RL10)

At the Passenger Focus sponsored meeting in Scotland to discuss the WCML RUS, the unanimous view of the representatives was that the main issue was lack of passenger access to WCML services between Glasgow and Carlisle. It is unfortunate in the extreme that the RUS interprets this as Lockerbie. It is Motherwell, Carlisle, Carstairs and Lockerbie, not mention formerly served areas such as Beattock. Lockerbie, with a population of some 4,000, has a reasonable number of services but these never appear to be the services users at Lockerbie actually want. As the RUS clearly understands and states, the main demand is for commuter services which main line services do not appear able to provide. While Lockerbie is necessarily a railhead as there are no other stations it is essentially a railhead for those with cars. Bus connections are poor. The promised integration by bus operator TOCs has failed to materialise or, some would say, deliberately failed to materialise.

The RUS is quite correct to say that the best solution to this problem, and not just Lockerbie's problem, is a "commuter" service extended from Glasgow with interchange for Edinburgh at Carstairs although, at present, the existing commuter service at Carstairs consisting of basically of two trains, poorly timed, per day is insufficient to meet any needs. It is difficult to understand the suggestion that this otherwise recommended service would need a "turn-back" at Lockerbie when there is demand for this whole area (from Motherwell to Lockerbie) to access WCML trains at Carlisle. One respondent likened the suggested turnback at Lockerbie to a turnback at Annan so Dumfries line trains would not have to go all the way to Carlisle! It is also difficult to understand the "lack of business case" when consultants' reports have supported the business case. This should not necessarily be confused with "Commercial case" and as few train services in Scotland have a good commercial case it is hardly surprising that a commuter service on the Scottish WCML would also need some financial support from Scottish or local government.

While the above is effectively outwith the scope of this RUS (or any other RUS) the authors must be congratulated on recognising that a commuter or local service is the best solution and that line capacity is sufficient to operate such a service. Of course, no passenger, when asked, would say they prefer a local service to a top flight Inter-City service or a connection rather than a direct service but these aspirations are not practical. Most would-be train users would benefit from a properly integrated train service giving better access and better frequency resulting in better effective journey times. Note that those would-be passengers who would benefit the most are those who do not have a car at their disposal and cannot pick and choose the most convenient railhead. A local service would also address the current priority complaint at Lockerbie which is overcrowding on Trans-Pennine services.

All the RUS can do at present is to shuffle train stops round at Lockerbie (and Motherwell). Put a service on, take a service off, give an appearance of doing something. It does address an issue to have some, or even one, direct Inter-City train calling but it cannot be the answer to this lack of access to services or even reducing Inter-City journey times.

Carlisle Inter-City Services (JT)

Carlisle is important to the South of Scotland. It is an important transport hub which should be improved rather than diminished as the result of discontinuing calls by a significant number of Inter-City trains. Given the slow speed limits through Carlisle station and its approaches it is

difficult to see that the small time savings could be justified in any terms. Perturbation allowances to enhance performance indices may be more significant than the operational timetabled stop-time.

Carlisle "Sub-optimal" Connections (RL11)

From a Scottish aspect the sub-optimisation of connections is not obvious. Some are good, some not so good, but the system works. The RUS is surely correct to consider that the long distance services are more constrained by factors along the line and that those responsible for specifying local services be responsible for better connection times. It is appreciated that this is not easy because local services are forced to stretch resources more and more to demonstrate an ever-so-slightly better business case rather than provide good connections for train users.

Inter-City Journey Times (JT)

This may have been thought to be the top priority and probably is amongst Scottish political leaders but the clear concern expressed in the focus group meeting was the gap in passenger access.

The RUS makes it quite clear that only massive investment can make significant reductions in journey time between Scotland and London. Railfuture Scotland supports this view and it was amply demonstrated by the misconceived West Coast Reconstruction/Modernisation project.

The only options available without massive infrastructure investment are reductions in the number of station stops perhaps with changes in skip stopping patterns. It is extremely doubtful if the fairly minimal journey time reductions achievable will make a significant improvement in Scotland to London train usage via the WCML. Other service initiatives by the operators may be more effective. At the same time the search should continue for the best stopping patterns for Inter-City services. However, these should include at least one direct Inter-City service at presently served stations but it is essential that there are alternative services both to link into Inter-City services and link adjacent stations. Skip-stop services often destroy links between individual, especially adjacent, stations. Contrary to popular views this response suggests that the train may not be at its best between Glasgow and London but probably is at its best for journeys such as Glasgow to, say, Stafford.

Carlisle is an important hub and interchange for a wide area including south-west Scotland and calls by long-distance trains should not be reduced.

Irregular or no direct services between Scotland, Manchester and Liverpool (RL8)

In previous decades train services between Manchester and Liverpool and Glasgow and Edinburgh had a relatively high priority. It is understood that now air travel is the preferred means despite the journey distances being ideal for rail travel. It appears that train services have not remained competitive. Improvements in various aspects are required. However, it is appreciated that frequent services (of short trains?) between each city and each other city may not be most practical in terms of cost effectiveness and capacity utilisation. Possible innovative solutions such as splitting/joining trains may be appropriate given positive risk assessments. It must be disturbing that lack of rolling stock is a major issue preventing improvement. Better frequencies and better destinations may be available for passengers by connections from London and Birmingham trains onto Manchester and Liverpool trains at Preston. Unfortunately this has, or perhaps still does, mean large numbers of passengers changing onto relatively unsuitable and very overcrowded Preston to Manchester/Liverpool local trains.

Constraint at Carstairs Junction? (3.5 Route Capacity)

It was surprising that even minor constraint was mentioned at Carstairs Station given that this is outwith the remit of the RUS and that hardly any trains stop at Carstairs. The Down Main is completely independent of the station. It is an important, busy, essential junction. The crossings are on the "Flat" except there has to be compromise between some of the crossings and the cant on the main lines. It is even more surprising that the station itself should be

mentioned as a minor constraint and not the coal trains running two miles wrong-line on the Down Main!

Constraint at Carlisle (3.5 Route Capacity and FC)

A minor constraint, mainly with respect to freight operations, is itemised for Carlisle. The RUS mentions lack of suitable length freight recess loops and also very slow speed limits through Kingmoor Yard and restrictive station layout with low speed limits.

The main issues appear to be:

Only 3 through station platforms

Effectively only 4 through tracks (through the station)

Immediately north of the station a short 2 track only length

Immediately south of Gretna Junction a fairly short 2 track only length

Flat junction at Gretna

A considerable section of multiple track between the two 2-track sections is present incorporating the goods lines through the extensive Kingmoor Yard with reportedly very low speed limits.

The 4 through tracks at the station have insufficient length for the longest freight trains and, which at minimum, foul the Maryport Line junction. The freight lines in the Kingmoor Yard area can and occasionally do recess several long freight trains but speed limits are reported to be very low.

Elsewhere there have been reports that the 2 track section viaduct may require major renovation work and there is no alternative route.

The above factors suggest there may be constraints with future freight traffic growth or when particular movements are taking place such as East Coast Route diversions.

This has long been recognised by successive infrastructure authorities and the strategy had always been that the freight avoiding line (or Freight Committee line) could be re-opened if and when necessary. However the infrastructure authorities have failed in their duty to protect the network and that trackbed has been lost, apparently by the city council considering a supermarket more important than the railway.

Only improving speed limits within the Kingmoor Yard appear to be considered within the scope of the RUS although apparently further initiatives may be announced before the final RUS.

It is surely imperative that Network Rail or any successor protects sufficient rights to allow multiple tracking between the station and Kingmoor and Kingmoor and Gretna Junction.

Freight Terminals (FC)

While not specifically mentioned there are relatively minor freight terminal issues between Carstairs and Carlisle.

If Cloburn Quarry near Carstairs is to continue to be a major supplier of track ballast consideration should be given to rail loading points much nearer the quarry rather than long distance road haulage although there are no obvious easy solutions.

Beattock (Down) Yard was trialled as a timber loading point and possible freight interchange. Poor rail access to the south and the sale of former railway properties as private homes appeared to terminate its use with possible future development being on the Up side.

Stephens Croft timber processing and bio-mass plant was located next to the WCML on the basis that there could be a rail connection. Sufficient traffic quantities suitable for rail have not yet been generated but there appears to be no external developments which would preclude rail access.

Longtown MoD sidings and accesses presumably remain within MoD authority although certain other unlikely uses have been proposed. There appears to be no serious threat to these accesses.

Kingmoor Yard, discussed in the RUS, remains as a freight yard operation and freight terminal and should be retained long-term with land not to be sold off of future adverse development.

The truncated Harker Branch could serve the rapidly growing retail, commercial and road freight hub at Kingstown. This branch and access should be protected, as far as is practical, from adverse development.

Rolling Stock – Passenger

Several references are made to passenger rolling stock in terms of lack of stock or difficulty making trains compatible with passenger loadings. It is difficult to think otherwise that for many years passenger rolling stock has declined in quality for passengers and that trains have become inflexible in design, expensive to build, ordered in small lots and sometimes without through corridor connections. Trying to make trains fit passenger loadings in multiples of 3 cars is one example. Also, as passenger demand grows and trains become longer they become unnecessarily heavy. Distributed power with motors and perhaps engines, transmissions and fuel tanks under every vehicle can hardly be cost effective or track friendly in long trains. Some modern passenger vehicles can weigh 60 tonnes each, similar to a 1920's express steam locomotive on the same number of axles!

Tilting Trains

Tilt does not seem to have produced significant benefits to justify its cost and complexity. Could tilt be used to level trains in stations particularly where there is adverse cant? There are no existing Scottish stops in this category but Penarth is an example.

Locomotives – Freight

Mention is made in the RUS of electric traction for heavy freight trains allowing faster average running times especially where steep grades are encountered. This is demonstratively true but overhead 25kV lines are serious safety issue in freight loading terminals and especially mineral loading terminals. Also, clearly, many freight lines are unlikely ever to be electrified. Many people connected with the industry would like to see a return to shunting locomotives handing over to main line electrified traction and also changeovers from diesel to electric traction en-route at the interface of electrified and non-electrified routes. Is this really practical except on a small scale?

Rail Freight Loading Gauge Clearance

Achievement of W10 gauge is welcomed as is long-term progression towards W12.

On Train Crowding (OC)

Scotland probably suffers much less than England in terms of on-train crowding as WCML from Scotland to London attract low demand levels and also additional services have been introduced. On-train crowding is a problem at Lockerbie with short, particularly Trans-Pennine trains. There is the general difficulty of accommodating peak holiday travel. The solutions are inescapable: more rolling stock, more appropriate flexible design of rolling stock and the introduction/development of third tier services to accommodate the shorter distance passengers for which present services are so poorly designed. The promise of a cascade of rolling stock with the electrification of lines in Lancashire appears very vague, especially as it is electric trains that the WCML in Scotland needs. It also appears that this stock will be in a fixed choice of 4 or 8 car units.

Station Passenger Handling Capacity (SC)

This is not an issue for Scottish stations (there only being one within the RUS). Scotland's main interchange at Carlisle is a spacious station not damaged by ill-conceived development (e.g. Manchester Victoria) but the whole access to the station is through two quite narrow automatic doors (in series) which tend to get obstructed by standing passengers. Former alternative and emergency accesses/exits now appear to be padlocked. It is to be hoped that full risk assessments are in place should there ever be a major incident at this station.

Car Parks (3.4)

The WCML RUS does not seem to consider car parks which are understood to be the subject of separate consultation. While it is self evident that some car parking should be provided it is also arithmetically evident that car parks could never be provided large enough to make a significant difference to the numbers of passengers using WCML trains. The real solution is to bring train access closer to where people live. Car parks are expensive to provide and passengers who do not use them should not be burdened with the cost and also any station parking should be reserved for passengers' use which in practice means car park charging, refunded by train fare or not. It is known that train users at Lockerbie are complaining about the lack of sufficient parking, the car park, being free, fills up very quickly in the morning.

Reactionary Delay (RD)

While supporting the RUS on reactionary delay it should not be used as a reason for excessive make-up time to improve reliability indices or for preventing full use of track capacity. As well as the stated interventions to improve junctions, etc., train operators must employ sufficient resources in terms of rolling stock, train crew, route knowledge and train rescue. There is a temptation to cut these resources to an absolute minimum as one of the ways operators can reduce costs but railway operation must have sufficient "redundancy" to avoid excessive reactionary delays.

Network Availability (NA)

Train users want a 24/7/52 railway but infrastructure maintenance and renewal is essential and both costly and counter-productive to attempt in very short possessions.

The RUS proposals for continuous improvements, such as bi-directional signalling, are supported. It should be noted that the M6/M74 is effectively a 24/7 facility although most nights there are extensive bi-directional sections and TSR's.

Scotland is badly affected in terms of Saturday night/Sunday morning possessions resulting in late starts on Sundays making many return journeys impractical, railfreight needing to compete with road freight over long distances and the discontinuation of Saturday overnight passenger services.

High Speed 2

The High Speed 2 Concept is supported, mainly on capacity grounds, but the current proposals do not appear fully developed or wholly practical in meeting the stated objectives. Network Rail, with extensive practical infrastructure experience, must monitor these HS2 developments. In particular the impression is that on interface between HS2 and the "Classic" network that the classic lines will be subservient to the needs of HS2. If the present proposals are both implemented and successful then additional non-stop trains must be expected to spill onto the classic lines with some conflict with operations of other sectors, particularly railfreight.

Open Access

Implications of the ending of the "Limitation of Competition" on the WCML and the possible introduction of open access passenger services have not been mentioned.

EMERGING STRATEGY

Railfuture Scotland is in general agreement with the issues and interventions outlined in the WCML RUS and therefore with the "Emerging Strategy". There are two particular observations (or re-enforcements) with respect to Scottish interests and some other, more general, observations.

Scotland Railfreight

Railfreight is important to Scotland. The network section at Carlisle, Kingmoor and to Gretna Junction should be railfreight "proofed". Where immediate interventions are unaffordable within the RUS then land should be protected from adverse development for future capacity improvement along with some dialogue with the City of Carlisle. It is felt that the RUS may be understating the shortfall in freight accommodation at Carlisle as a result of the enforced reversal of previous policy with respect to the freight avoiding line. Any Carlisle Station "redevelopment" should protect future railfreight capacity. Other overtaking loops on the Scottish section should be planned for lengthening and planning made for dynamic overtaking loops, especially on the banks.

Scotland Journey times and passenger access

The options for improving journey times between Scotland and The South, especially to London are limited. It is difficult to see the good business case relating to very minor journey time reductions and apparently at the cost of cutting out station stops. It must be good practice to cut out avoidable station stops on long distance services but it is essential that comprehensive, alternative services are provided and that there are suitable interchanges with Inter-City services. In the Scottish context this means all trains should call at Carlisle and that the solution judged by the RUS to be the best solution, a local service to connect into Inter-city services and to provide a shorter distance "commuter service" is progressed. However, where possible, potential passengers always appreciate at least one direct daily train.

General – Growth in Demand

The positive view on growth in demand is supported and with much of the network being relatively well used already then capacity improvement should aim for the higher limits of long-term growth.

General – Passenger Rolling Stock

It is clear that a major issue, not really related to route infrastructure, is lack of rolling stock in quantity and the inflexible design, small classes, high cost and high total train weights of existing and near-future trains.

General - Freight – Electric Locomotives

While electric power may be effective in reducing speed differences between freight on other trains and while there may be some long-term advantage of independency from petroleum oil it is not an easy answer. Currently, there are significant additional costs both in operation and infrastructure while railfreight operators are in direct cost competition with road haulage.

General – High Speed 2

Network Rail should monitor the HS2 proposals for practicality and particularly for future effects where HS2 runs onto classic lines with potential conflict for other sector operations.

General – On Train Crowding

It cannot be avoided that overcrowding is in some way inversely proportional to fare levels. This does not seem to be elaborated in the RUS. The public are in no doubt that above-inflation fare rises are imposed to suppress demand to limit overcrowding. In effect, overcrowding is already far worse than the authorities admit.